

# News Release



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## California State Parks Receives “Bright Idea” Award from Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government

### *Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Reforestation*

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, has selected the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Reforestation project for its newly-created Bright Ideas program. In its inaugural year, Bright Ideas is designed to recognize and share creative government initiatives around the country with interested public sector, nonprofit, and academic communities.

The reforestation project for Cuyamaca Rancho State Park in San Diego County is the first project to get certified for carbon sequestration credits on public lands, having been officially accepted by the Climate Action Reserve, the organization which verifies such efforts. With a \$2.8 million legal settlement between the State of California and ConocoPhillips Company and a fund-raising campaign by Coca-Cola and Stater Bros. Markets of Southern California, the project will result in the planting of more than one million seedlings in phases over the next ten years, sequestering 500,000 tons of carbon or more over the next 100 years.

“We are honored to receive this award,” said Ruth Coleman, director of California State Parks. “By doing this first project on public lands, we are showing that California continues to lead the way in reducing global warming.”

“For over 20 years, we have been honoring the country’s most creative public sector initiatives through our Innovations in American Government Awards Program,” said Anthony Saich, director of the Ash Center. “The creation of Bright Ideas was a natural next step to shed light on an even greater number of noteworthy programs and practices across our nation and to encourage practitioners to make these ideas work in their own backyards.”

In 2003, the forests within Cuyamaca were almost completely destroyed by the Cedar Fire which burned more than 24,000 acres, over 95% of the park. The fire burned so intensely that it did such extreme damage that most of the burned-over area has remained devoid of the

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original conifers with little natural regeneration observed. Forest experts concluded that without help, this forest would not regenerate.

From the start of the first phase of the Cuyamaca reforestation in January 2008, CALFIRE, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, has been a key partner. CALFIRE provided the seedlings from their CALFIRE Magalia Reforestation Center in Butte County, and the US Forest Service nursery in Placerville. Also, both San Diego State University and the University of San Diego provided research assistance on ecological damage and methods to mitigate that damage.

Other partners helped make this a perfect match for a public-private partnership. Stater Bros. Supermarkets, Coca-Cola, and California State Parks announced a 'Reforest California' campaign in 2008 to raise much-needed funds for reforestation and fire prevention in State parks hit hard by wildfires.

With the slogan "Join the Million Tree Challenge," the campaign challenged consumers and private businesses to participate and raise money towards the goal of creating 1,800 acres of newly planted trees – an area more than twice the size of Lake Arrowhead. Californians eagerly embraced the challenge and the Coca-Cola and Stater Bros. campaign raised over \$1.8 million in cash and in-kind contributions. In addition, the Odwalla juice company began a "Plant-A-Tree" Program that likewise contributed significant funding for the effort.

The reforestation project got an even larger boost made possible by American Forests, the nation's oldest nonprofit citizens' conservation organization. Through a settlement agreement between the California Attorney General and the Conoco-Phillips Company, Conoco-Phillips agreed to pay \$2.8 million to American Forests in return for the carbon sequestration offsets necessary for the construction of a new oil refinery in the Bay Area.

All of the business partners who promoted campaigns or made donations were brought to the effort by the Government Solutions Group of Pasadena, CA, a company that brings public and private interests together to foster community projects. In addition, the California State Parks Foundation, the private non-profit that supports California State Parks, worked to organize and sustain the fund raising program.

Bright Ideas seeks to complement the long-standing Innovations in American Government Awards Program by providing government agencies with a collection of new solutions that can be considered and adopted today. This new program serves to recognize promising government programs and partnerships that government officials, public servants, and others might find useful when faced with their own challenges.

This year's cohort of Bright Ideas was chosen by a team of expert evaluators made up of academics, practitioners, and former public servants. Selected from a pool of nearly 600 applicants including smaller-scale pilots, 2010 Bright Ideas address a range of pressing issues including poverty reduction, environmental conservation, and emergency management.

The 2010 Bright Ideas will be showcased on the Center's [Government Innovators Network](#), an online marketplace of ideas and examples of government innovation for policymakers and practitioners. The inaugural group of Bright Ideas will serve as a cornerstone of a new online community where innovative ideas are proposed, shared, and disseminated. The Ash Center also envisions that these Bright Ideas have the potential to become future Innovations in American Government winners.

Bright Ideas is an initiative of the Ash Center's Innovations in Government Program, which spotlights exemplary models of government innovation and advances efforts to address the nation's most pressing public concerns. Throughout its history, the program has generated a wealth of research based on award-winning government innovations and the study of how innovation occurs.



**HARVARD Kennedy School**

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### **About the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation**

The Roy and Lila Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence and innovation in governance and public policy through research, education, and public discussion. Three major programs support our mission: the Program on Democratic Governance; the Innovations in Government Program; and the Rajawali Foundation Institute for Asia. For more information, visit [www.ash.harvard.edu](http://www.ash.harvard.edu).

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